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III.—*Letter from Dr. Dieffenbach, describing the present state of Te Wanga Lake in Chatham Island.*

[In Dr. Dieffenbach's paper on the Chatham Islands (Jour. Roy. Geo. Soc., vol. xi. p. 204) he mentions that the Te Wanga lake, which was completely isolated from the sea at the time of his visit, at other times discharged its waters into it. It appears, by the following letter from that gentleman to the Secretary, that the communication between the waters of the lake and the sea is now permanently established.]

DEAR SIR,—A fact has just come under my notice regarding the geography of Chatham Island which is of some interest, as showing one of the many ways in which the configuration of countries may be modified.

The large lake of Te Wanga, which, as I stated in my communication to the Royal Geographical Society, occupies an extensive portion of the island; and which at the time of my visit in 1840 was separated from the sea by low sandhills, and about two feet above high-water mark; had filled again during the last year (1841) to such an extent, that a break took place, and the out-pouring water formed a broad communication between the sea and the lake, carrying away many thousand tons of sand, and forming a channel that appeared accessible to boats. But a boat which tried to enter this new bar-harbour was upset in the heavy surf, and six people were drowned.

By this outbreak the size of the lake was at first remarkably diminished. Easterly gales, however, which subsequently set in and continued for some time, drove a vast quantity of water from the sea into the lake: its surface is now on a level with the sea, its water partakes in all the movements of the tide, and yet the surface of the basin is actually much larger than it was before.

At the time when the agent of the New Zealand Company, who was living in Chatham Island, left that place for Wellington (I think, in September last), this state of the lake, now more properly an "inlet," remained unaltered.

I am indebted for this communication to Mr. Heaphy, the draughtsman of the New Zealand Company, who has lately returned from New Zealand.

January 13, 1842.
